

# HUNTINGTON BEACH INDEPENDENT

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Features

## Shooting for growth

**Photography club has field trips and monthly themes to teach members how to hone skills.**

By Jennifer Frehn

Whether you have trouble with a simple point-and-shoot or have been clicking away for decades, the Photographic Society of Orange County welcomes you.

Martha Blake, secretary and treasurer, has been with the group for 15 years, since its inception. She said the club's main goal is to help photographers learn in a friendly environment.

"We have critiquers come in, and they do a really good job, but they don't say 'Oh God, why did you take that picture?' " Blake said.

Mike Whitmore, the group's president, has been a member for 10 years and echoes that everyone is mutually supportive.

"Some of the [other] clubs out there are competitive. But the atmosphere of this club is that everyone is doing the best they can, but growing."

Which means the society has no experience requirement.

"Some people will say, 'I'm just starting photography and I'm not that good,'" Blake said. "We say, 'That's OK, come on in.'"

Huntington Beach resident Jay Stafford, on the society's board of directors, joined the group to increase his social circle and has been impressed by the talent he sees.

"I always considered myself a good photographer, but the growth in my quality of photography has been so noticeable," said Stafford, a retired aerospace engineer. "Paying attention during the meetings to the critiques and suggestions has improved my photography dramatically."

This summer the Photographic Society of Orange County went to Huntington Beach Central Park on one of its field trips. The nonprofit takes one field trip a month, and two overnights a year. In past years, the group has gone to China, Paris and Zion, Utah. However, most field trips are local and on Saturdays.

"A lot of times it's just watching other people take pictures, talking with other photographers," Blake said. "Someone does something really unique and you say 'I'd love to be able to do that.' "

In addition to holding occasional workshops, the group chooses a theme each month, which Blake said is another learning tool.

"Let's say [the theme is] the color purple. You see what other people envision with purple," she said.

Whitmore said the people are what make the experience fun.

"It is a great place to engage in my passion for photography. There's just super people. Some of my

best friends are in the club, very loving people who know how to have a good time with photography.”

Stafford said the society, the largest and oldest photo club in Orange County, has between 75 and 100 members.

“It’s a nice blend of youth, middle-aged people as well as senior citizens,” he said.

The group recommends attending at least one meeting for free before becoming a member. Annual dues are \$35 per person or \$45 for a family.

Stafford, a fifth-generation Angeleno, grew up in the South Bay area but has been won over by Orange County.

“I’ve been here for 12 years and never want to go back to Los Angeles,” he said.

Stafford’s favorite Huntington Beach settings to shoot?

“[I like] Central Park for its serenity and beautiful pastoral settings, and the pier for just the opposite reasons: the activity,” he said. “There’s always something going on down at the pier.”

*To view more photos from the PSOC, [click here](#).*

## IF YOU GO

**WHAT:** Photographic Society of Orange County

**MEETINGS:** From 7 to 9:30 p.m. the fourth Wednesday of each month.

**INFORMATION:** Call (714) 841-7551 or visit [www.psoc.net](http://www.psoc.net)

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